THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI): (a) Nagas and Mizos are among the major ethnic groups inhabiting the areas close to the Indo–Myanmar border.

(b) to (e). There is no formal agreement between the Government of India and the Government of Myanmar to facilitate interaction among the ethnic groups. However, an arrangement exists under which tribal people of both countries, who are ordinarily resident in the border areas, are allowed access across the border without passports and visas, provided they are in possession of valid permits issued by either Government. Under ths arrangement access is allowed within 40 kms of either side of the border.

National Commission for SCs/STs

1507. SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN: Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes which was created by Constitutional Amendment has been constituted'

(b) if not, the reasons for the delay and the target date for its constitution;

(c) whether the post of the Commissoner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is being abolished; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI SITARAM KESRI): (a) to (d). The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in accordance with amended Article 338 of the Constitution, is being constituted very shortly. The said Commission would replace the Special Officer popularly known as Commisioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes appointed, at present, under Art. 338.

Eradication of Untouchability

1508. SHR DHARMABHIKSHAM: Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the programmes undertaken for the eradication of untouchability; and

(b) the measures being taken to encourage inter–caste marriages and the incentives provided to them and their children in the field of education and employment?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI SITARAM KESRI): (a) and (b). Central assistance is provided to the States on a 50:50 basis for the enforcement of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 for ensuring adequate facilities such as legal aid, setting up of special courts, incentives for promoting inter–caste marriages, etc. Educational and employment benefits available for Scheduled Cates will be applicable to those children born of inter–caste marriage who are brought up in and accepted by the Scheduled Caste community as Scheduled Castes.

Financial Assistance to Andhra Pradesh for Research and Training to Scheduled Castes

1509. SHR DHARMABHIKSHAM: Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state the financial assistance provided to Government of Andhra Pradesh for implementation of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Research and Training relating to Scheduled Castes and the amount spent by the State Government during 1990–91?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI SITARAM KESRI): Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Research and Training relating to Scheduled Castes, financial

assistance is provided to Universities/Organisations/Social Science Research Institutes for conducting action oriented research and evaluative studies on development of Scheduled Castes. A total amount of Rs. 64,000/- was released to two such Research Agencies during 1990–91 for conducting research studies in the State of Andhra Pradesh. The amount is reported to have been spent by them.

Opening of New Regional Passport Offices at Siliguri and Ranchi

1510. SHRI PIUS TIRKEY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are contemplating to open Regional Passport Offices at Siliguri in North Bengal and at Ranchi in South Bihar;

(b) if so, the time by which these are likely to be opened;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the criteria being adopted by the Government in opening a Regional Passport Office at places other than the State capitals?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Due to administrative and financial constraints, it is not possible to open more Passport Offices in the near future.

(d) The size of population in catchment area of a passport office, equitable distribution of passport offices all over India, propensity of a population to apply for passports, geographical location of a passport office and availability of resources for the purpose etc. are usually the parameters based on which opening of a Passport Office is decided.

World Bank Assistance to Andhra Pradesh for Development of Fisheries

1511. SHRI J. CHOKKA RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether World Bank propose to provide assistance to the Government of Andhra Pradesh for the development of brackish water shrimp and reservoir projects in the State;

(b) if so, the details of assistance proposed to be given; and

(c) the present status of these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The estimated total project cost is Rs. 88.13 crore comprising Rs. 80.79 crore for the brackish–water shrimp culture component; Rs. 5.61 crore for the reservoir fish culture component and Rs. 1.73 crore for project management. About 90% of the total cost is expected to be provided by the World Bank as the total assistance for this project.

(c) This project was approved by the World Bank in the meeting of the Executive Board of Directors held at Washington on 14.1.92. The project will become credit effective from 1st May, 1992 for implementation over a 7 year period."

Epizootic Ulcerative Syndromes

1512. SHRI P.C. THOMAS: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state: